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In From the Cold to a Spy Reunion

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WASHINGTON, Oct. 1— They were virtually all "old boys" and they were all in from the cold today.

There were no disguises, no pseudonyms, no forged documents, no coded messages. This time the operatives who worked behind enemy lines, flew reconnaissance missions and conducted the nation's espionage work lingered in the hotel lobby and pinned on their plastic name tags.

"There's nothing like a spy convention," said Lieut. Col. Sammy V. C. Snider, retired, who flew spy planes over the Soviet Union for nearly five years.

They wore their Office of Strategic Services lapel pins and their U-2 tie-clips and throughout the hotel lobby there was the usual fare that is part of any reunion: the talk of a new grandchild, the banter about real estate and money market funds over the clinks of the ice.

But spies in from the cold have subjects more pressing on their minds.

Today, as the Association of Former Intelligence Officers held its eighth annual convention, the talk was also of automatic grenade launchers, the new Soviet AK74 rifle and new advances in intelligence techniques. The alumni, it turned out, were hobbyists, too.

'The Game Is Always There'

"I still think it's a fascinating game," said Lorenzo Herring, a retired military intelligence officer. "The game is always there. Once you've had access to the code rooms, you're hooked."

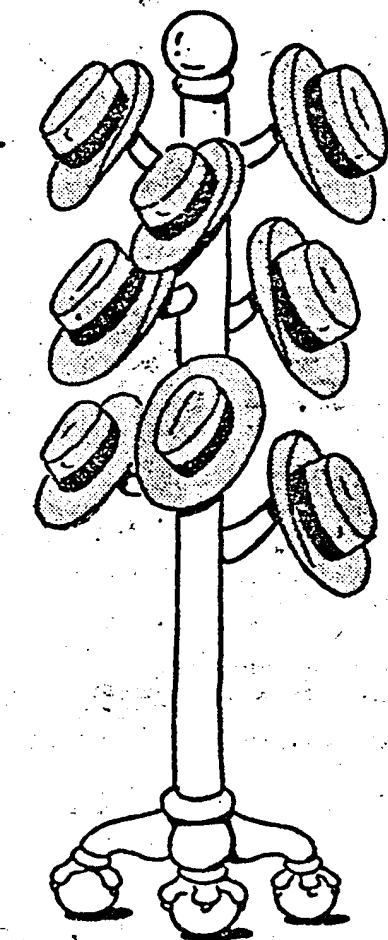
That, of course, is what drew some 350 retired members of the Central Intelligence Agency, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the armed forces' intelligence services and an alphabet soup of other intelligence agencies scattered around the Government, to suburban Virginia for a two-day conference.

"It's a narcotic field," said Stuart M. Quigg, a former military intelligence officer from Arlington, Va.

"It's like jumping from a plane," chimed in another, a former C.I.A. agent who, like many of his companions, spoke on the condition that he not be identified. "Once you've jumped, you're never the same."

They have left intelligence work and yet, in a way, it had not left them. "You've got all this training, and it's something you live with all the time," said John K. Greaney, executive director of the group and a retired assistant general counsel of the C.I.A. "Put it this way: When we read the papers, we read between the lines."

Many of their stories were similar. The days of stealth were gone, their clandestine missions were inching



Drawings by Charles Waller

farther and farther into the past, the hours of thrill and thrall had all but disappeared.

The few women in the group felt the same way. "I've been living in Florida for the last five years, and I feel quite out of it," said Betty Price-Swift, who worked in military intelligence for 25 years. "There's nothing like being on the inside."

They were inside again, if only for a moment. A parade of intelligence officials took up this year's topic, Soviet penetration of the United States, and they spoke with solemn lips but a with a winking eye.

Emergence as a Lobby

"There are myriad ways to go about collecting information," said Edward J. O'Malley, assistant director of the F.B.I., adding, with a knowing glance, "and I don't have to tell you how they do it."

He didn't. But the group's questions showed its sympathy with the intelligence officials and illuminated the organization's emerging role as a lobby group for intelligence issues.

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One questioner, turning to the subject of the transfer of technology to Soviet bloc nations, asked why the Government had not briefed the faculties of leading universities, which, she said, were "pushovers, if not worse" for the entreaties of the Russians. Mr. O'Malley assured her that such briefings were being made available.

"Do you see any Soviet participation in the Communist control of Santa Monica?" another asked, referring to the California city where officials aligned with the left-leaning Campaign for Economic Democracy were elected last spring.

"I wouldn't agree Santa Monica is under Communist control," Mr. O'Malley answered. "There is increased Soviet activity in the country. We're obviously aware of the Soviet domination and control of the Communist Party U.S.A. They have certain influence in other organizations. But I wouldn't want to characterize Santa Monica as one of them."

Strong Political Overtones

The cocktail talk was sprinkled with opposition to the drive for a nuclear freeze, to the Freedom of Information Act, which many intelligence officials maintain compromises the nation's ability to conduct intelligence operations, to the League of Women's Voters and to the press.

"Anybody who had any understanding of the origins of the free world wouldn't put out this garbage which supports Soviet Communism, which is another form of world dictatorship," said Richard Newsham, a retired O.S.S. and C.I.A. officer.

Their new lives have taken them into business, real estate, teaching and, the Washington standby, consulting. One is a member of the Indiana Legislature, another is a Roman Catholic priest. In the end, said the priest, they had not changed at all.

"No matter where one works or what one does, one is in a sense in mission territory," said Father John P. Gigrich, a former intelligence and security aide at the Pentagon and the National Security Agency. "In all the places I worked there were moral issues, issues that had to be wrestled with. I'm still wrestling. When any of us stops wrestling, we'll be dead."